

REMARKS

Independent Claim 29 now defines the invention as a method for manufacturing a vehicle frame assembly that is adapted to be resiliently supported upon a plurality of vehicle wheels by a suspension system and is adapted to serve as a platform upon which a body portion of the vehicle can be mounted. Initially, first and second side rails are provided that each extend the entire length of the vehicle frame assembly to be manufactured. The first and second side rails are then hydroformed so as to have respective integrally formed mounting structures. Structures are also provided on the first and second side rails to facilitate the connection of a front bumper assembly and a rear bumper assembly thereto. Then, a plurality of cross members is secured to the first and second side rails to form a vehicle frame assembly that is adapted to be resiliently supported upon a plurality of vehicle wheels by a suspension system and is adapted to serve as a platform upon which a body portion of the vehicle can be mounted. Lastly, a component of the vehicle is connected directly to the integrally formed mounting structures of the first and second side rails without the use of brackets or other mounts. In the dependent claims, the integrally formed mounting structures are defined as being either inwardly extending protrusions or apertures.

None of the art of record shows or suggests this method. Specifically, none of the art of record shows or suggests that structures can or should be provided on the first and second side rails to facilitate the connection of a front bumper assembly and a rear bumper assembly thereto. Furthermore, as set forth in the newly added dependent claims, none of the art of record shows or suggests that structures can or should be provided on the first and second side rails to facilitate the connection of a pair of control arms, a pair of leaf springs, a cab, or a box thereto. The Horton et al. reference discloses a method for manufacturing an engine cradle for use with a vehicle frame assembly which does not provide for the connection of these additional structures. Thus, it is believed that the claims are in condition for allowance.